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ABSTRACT

Blacks carry a disproportionate share of the economic burdens affecting America's people. Moreover, the income and employment discrepancies between black and white families are widening. The economic status of blacks is tied to the state of local, State and Federal government budgets, as well as to the general economy. Thus, the black population is particularly hurt by congressional inaction in the areas of welfare reform, national health insurance, and urban policy. In terms of employment, within almost every subgroup (age and sex), black unemployment rates are more than twice those for whites. Those most affected by recent labor trends are the nation's youth. General problems of youth unemployment are aggravated for blacks because of continuing racial discrimination and because of the fact that blacks are concentrated in central cities where jobs are most scarce. Together with the economic revival of urban areas, educational and job training programs are necessary for minority groups. Career development programs must focus on psychological, moral, political and social values, as well as upon job skills. The collaborative efforts of individuals, families, and religious and community institutions are all important to the development of this educational model. In essence, educational concerns should include the issues of responsibility, civic pride, moral responsibility, leadership, and community service.
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SOME YOUTH CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT CONSIDERATIONS WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

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SOME YOUTH CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT CONSIDERATIONS WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

The Economic Picture

One can easily argue with justification that the current economic woes which beset the city of New York, and in fact, the nation, are quite global in scope and telling in their magnitude. What one sees here at the local, state and federal levels point to a larger picture of decline in the availability of certain critical economic goods and services, at a time when the world is witnessing tremendous shifts in geo- and eco-politics.

Overall economic expansion has been slow. Government spending for social needs has been affected by taxpayers urging their legislators to reduce their tax burdens. Key programs such as urban policy, welfare reform and national health insurance have been postponed. Tax reform and the Humphrey-Hawkins Bill were caught up in a frantic Congressional rush to adjournment, and were passed in forms quite different from what were originally intended.

Widening Income Gap

While the prevailing economic circumstances indeed affect the vast majority of citizens, it is even moreso for blacks who carry a disproportionate share of the burden. Robert Hill (1979)[1] warns against some contrary depictions in the news media which purport that increasing

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proportions of black families are "making it" economically today. They are not. To the contrary, economic gains of many middle and upper income black families have eroded in recent years. The numbers of unemployed and poor persons in the black community are at their highest level.

Moreover, the income cleavage between black and white families is widening. In fact, the gaps between the jobless rates and family income of blacks and whites are the widest they have ever been in this decade. With the nation having experienced five recessions over the past two decades, black families which suffer disproportionately more from such situations, find themselves in 1979 experiencing the accumulating effects of these.[2]

Vernon Jordon (1979)[3] points out that of the twenty five million blacks, three quarters reside in metropolitan areas; slightly more than one half live in central cities. Among these, unemployment (including those who have given up looking for work and those who hold part-time jobs because they can't find full-time employment) is 23.1% or roughly 1 : 4 workers. Median income for black families is $9,242; for whites it is $16,740. Also, 28% of black families and 7% of white families is poor.

While not everyone in Black America is poor/jobless, the fact of the matter is that a disproportionate number is, and this factor has some of its bases in segregation, discrimination and economic deprivation. The road to economic parity with White America appears thorn-filled if not altogether closed.

/ Black/White

Black/White Joblessness

In 1976, for example, when white unemployment rates were as high as 7.0%, the black-white unemployment ratio was 1.87. By 1977, it had increased to 2.11, as white rates declined and black rates remained constant. By 1978, the ratio of black to white unemployment had increased to 2.27.[4]

Within almost every sub-group, black unemployment rates are over twice as high as those for whites. The one exception is in the female 20-and-over category where the ratio is 1.89. If all unemployment rates are compared to that for white males, the standings are even worse. The black adult female is nearly three and a half times the white adult male rate, and the rate for both male and female black teenagers is over ten times as high.[5] One cannot argue about the propriety of making these comparisons. Those who feel it is "natural" for employment rates to be higher for these subgroups will not be unduly distressed to find that they indeed remain much higher.

John Kenneth Galbraith, a noted economist, commented that many people find comfort in believing that selfishness and unenlightened self-interest are now ascendant. Needless to say, they have their usual disguises. They assert that selfishness is liberty; that unemployment is the price of free enterprise, the proper remedy for inflation; that education, libraries, parks and social services are the special extravagances of the poor.[6] When unemployment and despair lead to crime and disorder, even private security guards cannot protect, as the affluent will eventually learn. In the same sense, nuclear disaster does not differentiate between income brackets.

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The economic status of blacks has been closely tied not only to the state of the economy but to the state of government budgets at the local, state and federal levels. Because of economic discrimination faced in the private sector, blacks have been more dependent on public schools for education, public health clinics for medical care and local government for jobs and income.

Congressional inaction in building comprehensive programs in the areas of urban policy, welfare reform and national health insurance exarcerbates the economic plight of all citizens in general, but black ones in particular.

Youth Employment and Unemployment

Whether because of demographic changes or economic slowdowns, recent labor statistics show that the most persons affected by these trends are today's youth, moreso than adults; and especially so among minority youth. In spite of all the affluence, less than half of all Americans 16-19 have jobs today; and for those who are black, less than 25% of them are employed.[7] Unemployment is a serious matter for all segments of society, but it is especially devastating for young people who need opportunities to prepare and test themselves in adult roles.

For young people, a job is decisive evidence of self-worth. In a job, young people test and strengthen their abilities. They feel a sense of satisfaction and pride because they can demonstrate to their communities and themselves that they have something valuable to contribute. In short, a job is critical to youth development and therefore, unemployment undermines their progress to productive adulthood. This is

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consistent with American pragmatic thinking.

At a point in economic history when they need above all else, to demonstrate that they can make a difference, young people are forced to be passive and dependent, deprived of the chance to make genuine contributions.

Youth Unemployment Problem

The nature of youth unemployment, black and white, differs from the unemployment experienced by older workers. Most teenagers for example, are still in school; they work as a secondary activity and many of them have families who do not rely on them for their earnings. As a consequence, teenage workers tend to jump from job to job more frequently than older workers, and therefore boost the teenage unemployment rate. Nevertheless, there are many teenagers who do not fit this pattern. There are those who are out of school or whose families rely on their earnings. Black teenagers constitute a large percentage of this category.[8]

Youthful joblessness tends to feed upon itself. Studies[9] indicate that teenagers who drop out of school and then have trouble finding and holding jobs will do more poorly in terms of work and earnings, than other teenagers. This problem is particularly severe for young blacks. The problem is further aggravated by a continuing pattern of employment discrimination and by the fact that blacks are concentrated in central cities where economic decline has made jobs scarce. And while it is forecast that the total number of teenagers will decrease because of demographic patterns, a large proportion of blacks will still be evidenced in the teenage population through the 1980's.[10] It is anticipated that the

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increase will go from 11% in 1970 to more than 15% in 1985.[11]

The rate of joblessness among black teenagers continues to soar. This trend is related to the traditional inequitous distribution of economic goods and services for blacks in general. In 1954 among black youth between 16 and 19 years, 16.5% were unemployed as compared to 12.1% among white youth. Twenty five years later, most statistics show an increase in black teenage unemployment which is more than double that of white youth.[12]

Unemployment Outlook

Adams and Mangum (1978)[13] argue that the causes of black unemployment are so complex and are so rooted in such basic social and economic conditions that the problem appears to be virtually unsolvable. Few experts or policy makers are concerned about the problem. Some economists talk of the lingering crisis of teenage unemployment as having long-term consequences and conclude that in the near future the problem will become of decreasing concern to whites and of increasing concern to blacks.

Even with the best of intentions, the problem of black unemployment, stemming as it does from such basic social and economic conditions will not be solved quickly or easily. For one thing, the nation's central cities would have to be revived economically to make more jobs available where most unemployed blacks live. Central city schools would have to be improved if blacks are to be prepared for work. There must be a more equitable deployment of educational personnel and distribution of goods and services. One may call it integration. But

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ways must be found to motivate young blacks to remain in schools, to eliminate discriminatory employment practices, and to involve schools and private employers in prime sponsorships of new youth programs and initiatives.

Career Education Model

Jobs are a big issue. A critical issue related to this is the inability of most black youth to make a smooth and successful transition from school to work. Much of this inability may be attributed to age barriers, lack of experience, and few marketable skills even upon graduation from high schools. But other factors which impair the growth of today's black youth in society and business are the lack of understanding of actual job prospects or job preparation and general lack of guidance towards developing and enhancing success criteria in their lives.

Work is critically important for survival especially in an economic crunch. Black youth today not only need work time, experience and attention, but action that improves the climate for making jobs more fulfilling and thus, more productive.

There is obvious need for transitional type programs which will significantly improve both the employment prospects and future employability for black youth; indeed for all youth. There is need for programs designed to assist economically disadvantaged youth. The purpose of such programs should be to teach and guide youth in the areas of money and time management; job and coping skills. They should also, in the best interest of youth give them (youth) a broader view of the effect which business and industry have on our economy and on their lives as well.

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The conceptualization of programs should include programmatic curriculum constructs involving individual and group activities within several areas of career development service such as: occupational career information exposure and exploration; vocational counselling and personal guidance; test taking and job intensive skills; job training; job referral, placement and follow-up.

These curricula should derive their legitimacy from such goal oriented expectations as:

a). Developing increased knowledge of procedures necessary for seeking employment;

b). Providing meaningful work experience which orients the participants to the import of developing increased interest in school programs through an understanding of the significance of the ability to read, calculate, and interpret as the linkage between school and the world of work.

c). Increase in the sense of self worth on the part of youth as a necessity to becoming viable adult participants in the economy and contributors to their own financial responsibilities.

d). Developing a strong sense of initiative and independence in the economic structure with drive, ambition and activity which steer youth away from future public assistance rolls.

e). Developing skills in fiscal responsibility in the management of money earned by participants.

f). Demonstrating the understanding that work experience can be meaningful and available to those who possess the skills and abilities to seek and fortify their individual growth.

g). Establishing the articulation between the individual in the community and the world of work in a dynamic relationship which holds the potential for local, national and international implications.[14]

Scope and Address of the Problem

The issue of youth unemployment is a major one. There is, however,

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a more compelling issue that is by far larger than the ones of teenage unemployment, piecemeal career education projects and specific economic watersheds. That issue, it would seem, has to do with the role of education in social reform and human welfare.

A recent policy statement on the New York City School System called for a holding pattern for the continuation of funding for known obligations as well as the maintenance of services and programs that are currently provided.[15] This statement came on the heels of a spate of retrenchments which was caused by reductions in services in the areas of housing, health, police, sanitation, public transportation, welfare and education.

The role of education should be one which calls for, among other things, the redirection of confidence in the nation to accept diversity and pluralism as basic characteristics of a genuinely democratic political community. National interests come into prominence through political discourse. Therefore, group and individual democratic political rights and responsibilities of citizens must be promulgated through education.

National Thrust: Civic Education Model

The educational drive for this undertaking should derive its sustenance from the philosophical position and political tradition which call upon the national spirit to eschew the malaise about government and schooling which comes from the right and the left of the academic community; from the neo-conservative scholars in economics and sociology who have gained a new respectability within recent times.

/This

This drive should serve to counter the signs of cynicism and skepticism which greet the nation on all sides about the role of government; about alienation and exasperation with public institutions, public officials and organized teachers; about simplistic and self-serving complaints by big business about big government and the undignified scramble by politicians to echo "me too", and, the taxpayers' revolts, often directed at schools because taxpayers can make their voices heard most directly by voting down school bond issues and budgets.

Further the educational drive should reactivate the political spirit which traditionally called upon government to take the lead in social reform when voluntary efforts proved to be indifferent or unsuccessful. Typical examples of these social reform areas are in relation to prisons, women's suffrage, child labor, universal education; the efforts to dismantle segregation in the schools, equalize financial support for education and open up access to all citizens including those who are disadvantaged by race, ethnic or linguistic background and poverty.

Thus, compensatory education, affirmative action and other humane efforts to achieve a more meaningful, secure freedom and equality of rights by governmental action would come to be viewed as being essential for the health of the nation, and not necessarily for the sole advantage of righting wrongs, or of individuals getting jobs or moving ahead. The fact of the matter is that these are all public issues which require public attention. They involve political values, require political knowledge to understand them, and demand political skills on the part of the citizenry in order that they may have some feasible effect upon their

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solution.

Therefore, they require, in essence the collaborative efforts of individuals, families, religious institutions, neighborhoods, communities, media, museums, libraries and schools. These are dynamic components of our social system. They constitute the vital channels through which vestiges of the social heritages may be passed on to posterity; understanding of the democratic political process at work may be facilitated; and the dramatization of the significance of one's civic responsibilities within the democratic structure may be nurtured or enhanced.

Inherent in this model are the scope and sequence of content material for the promotion of the citizen's political socialization; an establishment of the awareness of his/her roles of rights and responsibilities in the social order. It is not meant to imply that this process is not now taking place. It is to say that alternative modes must be used to enhance and buttress what is already available in the area of civic education. These new ideas should serve to support the much criticized traditional moral instruction and outward ceremonies of patriotism through pledges of allegiance, loyalty oaths, salutes to the flag, and the singing of patriotic songs.

International Implications

This is the international year of the child. Educators should telegraph a signal of welcome to the world-wide emphasis on tomorrow's adults, for children are the world's most valuable natural resource. We live in a global society in which political boundaries still exist as separations among nation-states. However, increasing recognition of the

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interdependence of peoples in common problems such as energy, pollution, economics, trade, food and population control has altered public perceptions of the role of nations in international affairs.

Multi-national corporations expand in number and relationships. Their interests necessitate negotiations and communications beyond commerce, political diplomacy or war. Travel systems are virtually global with sizable numbers of people moving about relatively freely. International money exchange has become a major force in national political decision-making. Pollution created in one part of the planet influences another.

In a global society, narrow nationalistic education appears to be dysfunctional. Nationalistic education is intended to produce national unity with national loyalty having two forms: efforts to instill strong positive beliefs in national values and efforts to instill strong negative beliefs about those ideas, symbols, events and people who are considered contra-national.[16]

The schools of a society serve the interests of that society. Therefore, it is imperative that the public see that the interests of America are consistent with the mission of its education; that its human values and civic responsibilities be attuned to the tenor of a global society.

Long-range Goals

Transcending political barriers locally, nationally or globally would require something in the nature of a regeneration of political education of the populace. It is critical at this epoch of American

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history when political pessimism, alienation, apathy and disaffection need to be challenged by the resurgence of the primacy of the civic role of schools.

It should be a major part of the schools' functions to provide the basics to civic learning; to engage the long-range and fundamental values of the political community; to provide realistic knowledge of the working of political institutions and processes; and, to provide the skills of political behavior required for genuine citizen participation in a democracy.

This participation should free up thinking, remove barriers, refurbish the national spirit, invite the continuing democratic exercise of justice and fairplay and provide the scope for the development of respect, trust, differentiation between civic rights and wrongs.

The nation has the responsibility for bringing about an adjustment to the decline in world economic changes which are forcefully impacting on the economy. Education must help point the way. The role of education in helping to bring about this economic adjustment becomes crucial. There is need for education to prepare people to adjust to continuing economic changes over the next two decades, a period which in all likelihood will be subjected to cyclical economic stress.

Higher education should become the chief sponsor of this thrust, by providing the kind of leadership which can permeate the pre-college educational infrastructure with imaginative education models, curriculum conceptions and designs based on pragmatic futuristic thought. Technology has bridged space; the world has shrunk, longevity, population and

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knowledge have increased while vital economic resources have decreased. The world is undergoing tremendous changes and mankind must keep abreast. The age of cybernetics and push-button technology evidenced by the ubiquitous ultra-modern media and communications mechanisms would require a concomitant change in life style and preparation for copability. For these reasons, long-range educational preparation should include:

1. New curricula which will include education for lifelong learning, a focus on international law; understanding of the nature of rapid change; problems of privacy and protection; new kinds of skills in law, medicine etc., as well as Human Relations and global understanding.

2. A restructuring of schools of Education to include preparation of teachers; a more equitable participation in governance; consortia of institutions to coordinate ideas, programs, plans and progress to avoid waste in human power, time, energy and duplication.

3. More equitable distribution of goods and services through coordination. To include economic legal, social, health and other services to those who do not now have ready access to them or lack the ability to mobilize or participate in what is available in the environment.

In essence, educational concerns should not be limited to jobs and economic considerations, despite their legitimacy, nor only to reading, writing and computational skills, nor the pursuit of excellence in all undertakings. Of paramount importance too, is the issue of responsibility. Not only should one strive for material success, but for the fundamentals of civic pride, moral responsibility and leadership and a sense of individual fortitude dedicated towards service and community.

Footnotes

[1]Hill, Robert B., "The Economic Status of Black Families," in James D. William (ed.), The State of Black America 1979. (New York: National Urban League Inc., 1979), pp. 25-39.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Jordan, Vernon, "Introduction," in Ibid., pp. i-xi.

[4]Simms, Margaret C., "The Economy," in Ibid., pp. 1-23.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Galbraith, John Kenneth, Vice President, Americans for Democratic Action, ADA Legislative Newsletter, (n.d.), pp. 1-2.

[7]Jabs, Carolyn, "A Job is More Than a Paychech," Resources for Youth Newsletter 8 (1979).

[8]Singer, James W., "The Problem of Being Young, Black and Unemployed," The National Journal, September 16. 1978, pp. 1456-1461.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Adams, Avril and Mangum, Garth L. The Lingering Crisis of Youth Unemployment (Utah: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 1978).

[11]Singer, p. 1460.

[12]Proposal - SOAP (Summer Occupational Awareness Program) submitted by National Urban League, Inc. to Office of Youth Programs, Department of Labor, March 1979.

[13]Adams and Mangum, p. 54

[14]Adapted from NUL Proposal, "Youth Employment In-Schools Program for 1979-80," 1979.

[15]Statement of Stephen R. Aiello, President of New York City Board of Education and Frank J. Macchiarolla, Chancellor of Schools, before the New York City Council, City Hall at New York City Board of Education Departmental Hearings, May 24, 1979.

[16]Nelson, Jack L., "Nationalistic Education in a Global Society," Paper presented at the National Council for the Social Studies Conference, Atlanta, Georgia, November, 1975.

CAREER EDUCATION GOAL ORIENTED MODEL

a). Developing increased knowledge of procedures necessary for seeking employment.

b). Providing meaningful work experience which orients the participants to the import of developing increased interest in school programs through an understanding of the significance of the ability to read, calculate, and interpret as the linkage between school and the world of work.

c). Increase in the sense of self-worth on the part of youth as a necessity to become viable adult participants in the economy and contributors to their own financial responsibilities.

d). Developing a strong sense of initiative and independence in the economic structure with drive, ambition and activity which steer youth away from future public assistance rolls.

e). Developing skills in fiscal responsibility in the management of money earned by participants.

f). Demonstrating the understanding that work experience can be meaningful and available to those who possess the skills and abilities to seek and fortify their individual growth.

g). Establishing the articulation between the individual in the community and the world of work in a dynamic relationship which holds the potential for local, national and international implications.

EDUCATION PLANNING ISSUES

1. New curricula which will include education for lifelong learning, a focus on international law; understanding of the nature of rapid change; problems of privacy and protection; new kinds of skills in law, medicine, etc., as well as Human Relations and global understanding.

2. A restructuring of schools of Education to include preparation of teachers; a more equitable praticipation in governance; consortia of institutions to coordinate ideas, programs, plans and progress to avoid waste in human power, time, energy and duplication.

3. More equitable distribution of goods and services through coordination. To include economic, legal, social, health and other services to those who do not now have ready access to them or lack the ability to mobilize or participate in what is available in the environment.